

Message Text

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MIL ADDEES FOR POLADS

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PINT GW

SUBJ: NEW CRISIS ABOUT NRW MINISTER PRESIDENT SUCCESSION

REF: DUSSELDORF 710

1. SUMMARY: HANS OTTO BAEUMER, LANDTAG DEPUTY AND HEAD OF THE SPD LOWER RHINE DISTRICT, INSTIGATED BY SUCCESSION CONTENDER JOHANNES RAU, TRIGGERED OFF A NEW CRISIS ABOUT THE REPLACEMENT OF HEINZ KUEHN AS MINISTER PRESIDENT OF NORTH RHINE-ESSTPHALIA (NRW). THE PARTY BRASS DID NOT CONTRADICT. THE FDP, AS COALITION PARTNER OF THE SPD WAS

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CAUGHT UNAWARES BUT ASSERTED ITS DETERMINATION TO CONTINUE THE COALITION UNTIL 1980. MEANWHILE THE CDU HAS MADE A COALITION OFFER TO THE FDP, AND OPPOSITION LEADER KOEPLER IS PREPARED TO RUN AGAINST ANY NOMINEE AS NRW MINISTER PRESIDENT. PUBLIC REACTION AGAINST THE SPD'S BICKERING ABOUT KUEHN'S SUCESSION WAS NEGATIVE. THE SPD ITSELF HAS UNDERMINED KUEHN'S POSITION SO THAT

IT HAS BECOME ALMOST UNTENABLE. THE COUP HAS DIMINISHED RAU'S CHANCES TO SUCCEED KUEHN. END SUMMARY.

2. HANS OTTO BAEUMER, LANDTAG DEPUTY AND HEAD OF THE LOWER RHINE DISTRICT OF THE SPD TOOK THE OCCASION OF THE ANNUAL DISTRICT CONVENTION OF HIS PARTY ON JUNE 17, 1978 TO TRIGGER OFF A NEW CRISIS ABOUT THE REPLACEMENT OF HEINZ KUEHN AS MINISTER PRESIDENT. HE THANKED KUEHN FOR HIS READINESS TO RELINQUISH HIS OFFICE PRIOR TO THE HESSE AND BAVARIAN LANDTAG ELECTIONS ON OCTOBER 8, 1978, AND THEN CALLED KUEHN'S REPLACEMENT OVERDUE BECAUSE HE IS WAY PAST HIS PRIME. WE WERE INFORMED THAT AN AGREEMENT FOR ADVANCING THE RETIREMENT DATE HAD BEEN REACHED BETWEEN KUEHN AND THE LANDTAG FACTION, BUT WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE MATTER SHOULD BE TREATED AS CONFIDENTIAL PENDING CONSULTATIONS WITH THE FDP AS COALITION PARTNER.

3. NONE OF THE PARTY BRASS ATTENDING THE CONVENTION TOOK EXCEPTION TO BAEUMER'S REMARKS. IN FACT, INFORMED CIRCLES HAVE SAID THAT JOHANNES RAU, NRW MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND RESEARCH AND NRW/SPD CHAIRMAN, ONE OF THE TWO CONTENDERS FOR KUEHN'S JOB, HAD INSTIGATED BAEUMER TO COMMIT THE INDISCRETION. THE DELEGATES OBVIOUSLY HAD NO PARTICULAR OBJECTION BECAUSE THEY REELECTED BAEUMER AS LOWER RHINE CHAIRMAN WITH A LARGE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MAJORITY.

4. BAEUMER'S STATEMENTS STIRRED UP THE POLITICAL SCENE IN NRW. THE HEADS OF THE OTHER THREE NRW/SPD DISTRICTS POINTED OUT THAT BAEUMER'S DISCLOSURES WOULD NOT CHANGE THE PARTY'S PLANS TO HOLD A SPECIAL CONVENTION ON SEPTEMBER 17, 1978, TO SELECT A CANDIDATE FOR KUEHN'S OFFICE. THEY DID NOT RULE OUT KUEHN'S RETIREMENT PRIOR TO OCTOBER 8, 1978, THE DAY OF THE LANDTAG ELECTIONS IN HESSE AND BAVARIA. THERE APPEARS TO BE A VAGUE HOPE THAT THIS WOULD HELP THE COALITION PARTNER, THE FDP, IN THESE ELECTIONS. CONVERSELY, THE FEAR THAT A MAJOR ELECTION DEFEAT OF THE FDP IN HESSE MAY CAUSE FDP DISSENTERS IN THE NRW LANDTAG TO VOTE AGAINST THE SPD CANDIDATE AFTER KUEHN'S RESIGNATION SEEMS TO BE MORE REALISTIC. HOWEVER, THE FINAL DECISION ON THE TIMING OF KUEHN'S RESIGNATION AND SUCCESSION IS TO BE ESTABLISHED TOGETHER WITH THE FDP. DR. HORST LUDWIG RIEMER, NRW/FDP CHAIRMAN CONFIRMED THAT SUCH TALKS ARE SCHEDULED FOR THE VERY NEAR FUTURE.

5. MEANWHILE THE CDU HAS NOT BEEN IDLE. OPPOSITION

LEADER HEINRICH KOEPPLER IS PREPARED TO RUN AS COUNTER CANDIDATE AGAINST KUEHN'S SUCCESSOR AND HAS INVITED THE FDP TO FORM A COALITION WITH THE CDU, OFFERING THREE CABINET POSITIONS INSTEAD OF THE PRESENT TWO. THE FDP, CAUGHT BY SURPRISE BY KOEPPLER'S OFFER, REJECTED COALITION TALKS WITH THE CDU AND REITERATED ITS DETERMINATION TO STICK TO THE COALITION WITH THE SPD UNTIL 1980.

6. STRANGELY ENOUGH POLITICAL CRISES IN NRW MOSTLY OCCUR, WHEN (OR BECAUSE) MINISTER PRESIDENT KUEHN IS OFF ON ONE OF HIS FREQUENT TRIPS TO THE FAR CORNERS OF THE GLOBE. THIS TIME HE WAS INFORMED OF THE NEWS IN THE PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF CHINA, WHENCE HE RETURNED
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IMMEDIATELY, ALTHOUGH HIS HASTY RETURN WAS PRIMARILY MADE NECESSARY BY OPPOSITION DEMANDS FOR THE RESIGNATION OF INTERIOR MINISTER HIRSCH BECAUSE OF HIS ALLEGED ROLE IN THE MISHAP IN THE SCHLEYER INVESTIGATION. THE SPD GAVE KUEHN AN "UNLIMITED VOTE OF CONFIDENCE" UPON HIS ARRIVAL.

7. COMMENTS: BAEUMER'S INDISCRETION CREATED SOME SORT OF A SHOCK FOR THE NRW/SPD LANDTAG FACTION LEADERS, SINCE EVERYTHING SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN WORKED OUT IN DETAIL FOR KUEHN'S RESIGNATION. THE NRW/SPD LANDTAG FACTION HAD A STORMY SESSION ON JUNE 20 FROM WHICH RAU EMERGED WITH CONSIDERABLY DIMINISHED CHANCES, WHILE THE CHANCES OF HIS COMPETITOR, NRW FINANCE MINISTER DR. DIETHER POSSEK ARE INCREASING. THE FDP IS ALSO FINDING ITSELF IN AN AWKWARD POSITION AFTER HAVING Warded OFF AN ATTEMPT TO UNSEAT KUEHN ONLY TWO MONTHS AGO (SEE REFTEL). THE WHOLE AFFAIR HAS BEEN BLOWN UP BY THE MEDIA AND ONCE MORE PROVIDED BAD PUBLICITY FOR THE SPD. KUEHN'S POSITION AS MINISTER PRESIDENT APPEARS TO BE UNDERMINED TO A POINT WHERE IT HAS BECOME UNTENABLE. DESPITE REPUDIATIONS THERE ARE PERSISTENT RUMORS THAT THE PRESENT COALITION CANNOT BE SURE OF THE SUPPORT OF ALL OF ITS 105 DEPUTIES, ESPECIALLY SINCE THE FDP DEFEATS IN LOWER SAXONY AND HAMBURG ON JUNE 4. KOEPPLER ON THE OTHER HAND CAN RELY ON THE SUPPORT OF THE 95 CDU DEPUTIES. EACH VOTE LOST TO THE COALITION IS A GAIN TO THE OPPOSITION; YET KOEPPLER WILL NEED 101 VOTES TO BECOME MINISTER PRESIDENT.DUX

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